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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 000438

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS; NSC FOR E. MILLARD  
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [CE](#) [NO](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: NORWEGIANS SEE HOPE FOR LTTE-GSO AGREEMENT ON  
RECONSTRUCTION MECHANISM

REF: (A) COLOMBO 404 (B) COLOMBO 373

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JEFFREY J. LUNSTEAD FOR REASON 1.4 (B AND D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Both sides have been flexible on negotiations for a "mechanism" for distributing reconstruction assistance to the North and East, and the Norwegians believe an agreement is possible in the next few days. Such an agreement would not only assist in the reconstruction effort, but would have great political significance. GSL and LTTE stressed to Solheim their commitment to the Cease Fire Agreement. Solheim toured other parts of the country, seeking to build support for peace and the Norwegian role. Solheim does not think the Tigers will retaliate for the Kausalyan killing. (We are not as sanguine.) If an agreement on a mechanism is reached, the USG should praise it publicly. Suggested text para 10. END SUMMARY.

"Mechanism" Deal Near?  
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12. (C) Norwegian Special Envoy Eric Solheim briefed major donors Feb 28 on his week-long visit to Sri Lanka and Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattskar also briefed on status of negotiations between the LTTE and the GSL on a "mechanism" to deal with reconstruction assistance in the North and East. Brattskar, who has been brokering this negotiation for the past two months, said that a week earlier he had not been hopeful. Now he was much more optimistic. He had facilitated extensive talks on Friday and Saturday and the two sides were now looking at a common piece of paper. "If they both want it," Brattskar said, and no new issues come up to disturb the process--like the killing of LTTE leader Kausalyan--"it is quite possible they will have an agreement in a few days."

13. (C) Brattskar noted that this progress was the result of the hard work of the two parties. While an agreement on a mechanism would be necessary for fair and equitable distribution of assistance in the North and East, it would also have political aspects. It would be the first time the LTTE and the GSL would cooperate on the national level, and it would strengthen ongoing cooperation at the regional and district level. Brattskar said that if the mechanism is agreed upon, donors will need to re-think some of their reconstruction plans.

Political Significance of Mechanism  
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14. (C) Both Solheim and Brattskar stressed again the political significance of a possible agreement. Such an agreement would be limited to tsunami assistance, and only in the affected coastal belt. Solheim said that the progress made was in part because the Norwegians forced both sides to avoid issues which belonged in the peace process itself. The formal participation of the Muslims in the mechanism would also mark a first in the peace process. Of course there could still be problems even if an agreement is reached, Solheim said, and any mechanism would have to work on a consensus basis if it were to be successful.

Building Support for Peace  
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15. (SBU) Solheim spent part of his week-long visit touring areas of Sri Lanka and meeting Sri Lankans whom the Norwegians have not concerned themselves with previously. He went to both the South and East (Galle, Matara and Ampara) and to Kandy, where he met the monks who head two of

the most important monastic institutions in Sri Lanka. The monks were supportive of the peace process and the Norwegian role. "We should have done this sooner," Solheim said, and also said that they would do it again.

#### Support for Cease Fire

16. (C) Both government and LTTE officials stressed to Solheim their commitment to the Cease Fire Agreement. The LTTE was disturbed by the Kausalyan killing, and believed it was not done by the Karuna faction, but by others working in collusion with the Sri Lankan military. Solheim opined that one reason the Tigers had not retaliated for Kausalyan's killing was because of the statement protesting the killing made by UN Secretary General Annan. The Tigers have two assets, Solheim said: military strength and international recognition. Since they received recognition from the statement, they did not need to use their military strength. Would there be retaliation in the future? "A good chance not" Solheim said. Reverting to an earlier theme, Solheim said that if there were no agreement on a mechanism, the Cease Fire Agreement would come under stress.

#### LTTE Visit to Europe

17. (C) Solheim said that an 8-10m member LTTE delegation was to visit several European countries in March. Solheim told them that they should not come until they had agreement on the mechanism. Solheim also warned them that they would face increased questioning about child recruitment following the recent report delivered to the Security Council (more on this report septel).

18. (C) COMMENT: The normally restrained Norwegians were almost jumping up and down with excitement (Norwegian style excitement, anyway) because of the prospect of agreement on a mechanism. They cautioned that the two sides had "come 990 meters, but they still had the last ten meters to go." Both sides are showing unusual flexibility, however, and this might actually happen. If so, we believe the Department should issue a statement praising the agreement. Suggested text below.

19. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: We are not as sanguine as Solheim, however, that the Tigers have foresworn vengeance for Kausalyan's killing because of Annan's statement. The Tigers have shown time and again that they will wait for the time they think is right to take revenge. It is much more likely that the prospect of the mechanism is restraining them than some abstract satisfaction at a UN statement. They know that a killing now would make it much more difficult to agree on a mechanism.

#### NOMINAL TEXT OF STATEMENT

10. (C) Since we have not yet seen the text of the agreement, it is difficult to give a specific response. Pending further information, we think a statement should be along the lines of:

The United States is very pleased that the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have reached agreement on a mechanism to coordinate reconstruction assistance in the North and East of Sri Lanka. We commend the flexibility shown by both sides in the discussions leading to this agreement. If implemented properly, this mechanism will ensure that tsunami victims receive the assistance they deserve on a fair and equitable basis, without regard to ethnic or political factors. We hope that successful functioning of the mechanism will build confidence and trust on both sides and stimulate progress towards a political settlement.

LUNSTEAD